

Mississippi State Board of Medical Licensure (MSBML)
Strategic Plan 2025-2029

1. Comprehensive Mission Statement

The mission of the Mississippi State Board of Medical Licensure (MSBML) is to ensure the protection of the health, safety and welfare of Mississippians through implementation and enforcement of laws involving the licensing and regulation of physicians, podiatrists, physician assistants, radiology assistants and acupuncturists and through the objective enforcement of the Mississippi Medical Practice Act.

2. Philosophy

The MSBML is committed to the continued protection of the health, safety and welfare of Mississippians. The philosophy of the MSBML is to ensure healthcare professionals licensed by the MSBML meet the licensing standards as directed by the Mississippi State Legislature and to regulate the practice of MSBML licensees. The Board seeks to ensure the citizens of Mississippi receive quality health care by carefully licensing and regulating the nearly 7,000 healthcare professionals practicing in the state as well as an additional 5,000 telemedicine practitioners.

3. Relevant Statewide Goals and Benchmarks

Statewide Goal #1.: HEALTH – To protect Mississippians from risks to public health and to provide them with the health-related information and access to quality healthcare necessary to increase the length and quality of their lives.

Relevant Benchmark:

- In partnership with Physicians Workforce, research and identify numbers and types of practitioners needed to fill undeserved or shortage areas of the state.

Statewide Goal #2.: GOVERNMENT – To create an efficient government and an informed and engaged citizenry that helps to address social problems through the payment of taxes, the election of capable leaders at all levels of government, and participation in charitable organizations through contributions and volunteerism.

Relevant Benchmarks:

- Average wait time for government services
- Regulatory efficiency: average length of time to resolution of documented complaints to professional licensing agencies

4. Overview of the Agency 5-Year Strategic Plan

Over the next 5 years the MSBML will strive to educate its licensees, as well as the general public regarding state and federal licensing laws. Statistics show that Mississippi has one of the lowest physician-to-patient ratios in the United States. It is the MSBML's goal to reduce the time it takes for licensees to acquire a license but still protect the public from incompetent healthcare professionals. In doing so, the MSBML will be updating existing software programs, and its laws and rules; utilizing technology more proficiently; and educating licensees and the public of the role of the MSBML. Over the past 5 years, the agency has actively participated in the Interstate Medical Licensing Compact and will continue to encourage new applicants to utilize the services of the Compact.

Prescription drug diversion and abuse is a nationwide problem, often referred to as the Opioid Crisis. Deaths due to drug overdoses now outnumber deaths from vehicle accidents. Pain management involves a juggling act that balances the needs and interests of the patient, the health care professional, and the public. Prescribing investigations of pain management practices require many hours by the Investigative staff. The responsible opioid prescribing of controlled substances offers physicians effective strategies for reducing the risk of addiction, abuse and diversion of opioids and other controlled substances those physicians prescribe to their patients. In addition to investigating controlled substance prescription abuse, the agency's investigators seek to identify impaired providers, providers participating in unprofessional or illegal conduct with patients, and other violations of the Medical Practice Act.

Planning for the 2024 legislative session, the Board is proposing one primary piece of legislation. Currently we are possibly the only regulatory agency that lack the ability or option to fine our licensees when necessary. Our disciplinary options revolve around suspension of license. With the statutory option of imposing a financial sanction on the licensee, the Board has the discretion of keeping the physician working while applying proper discipline.

The complexity of health care and the opioid crises have resulted in many more investigative findings which in turn have increased the need for disciplinary hearings and court actions. Investigative findings are projected to be even higher in the current and future years with the addition of a new Investigative position approved by the legislature for FY20.

The 2021 Legislative Session granted the Board its own in-house legal counsel. An attorney was hired and began work in FY 2022. Outside court reporters continue to be employed for all Board-related cases.

The Board's Legal Division is now staffed with a Senior Attorney and a Paralegal. Having full-time employees will not only reduce contractual fees, it will allow the investigators the opportunity to discuss issues as cases are being developed and not just before hearings. In-house counsel will allow the agency to be proactive in researching national standards and developing policies and procedures and addressing them through the Administrative Procedures Act which has become more cumbersome with the oversight provided by the Licensed Occupational Review

Board. The Paralegal support will allow the Board minutes and disciplinary hearing documents to be transcribed timelier and for case files to be maintained as required.

As the agency has a continuing need for additional support for various departments, 2 additional Customer Service Representative positions were added in the Licensing Division, while also providing support to the Executive and Deputy Director. Additionally, with the new technology initiatives of the Board, the Board requires a fourth Data Analyst position to serve as support for the IT Division. The position will be responsible for tracking vendor milestone completion and associated payments, coordinating testing of system components between the divisions, monitoring user acceptance testing, reporting project activities, and other similar administrative functions for the Information Technology Division.

Having the appropriate positions in the correct divisions will ensure that the Board meets and exceeds its goals in conjunction with the Statewide Strategic Plan and provide a safer public health community for Mississippians.

Costs involved with investigations have seen a steady rise. The cost of expert review and hearing testimony have increased. The complexity and occurrence of broader medical investigations involving multiple physicians has grown. On average, our costs have increased 33% over what they were just two years ago.

5. Agency's External/Internal Assessment

- 1) An increase in the number of graduates from medical, osteopathic and physician assistant schools who apply for a Mississippi medical license will impact the number of applications processed and licenses issued by current staff.
- 2) Additional licensees will increase the number of complaints filed, the number of investigations conducted, and the number of pain management medical practices and bariatric medicine clinics.
- 3) Changes in federal and state prescription drug laws will determine the availability of drugs prescribed.
- 4) Board's ability to right-size the agency with the proper job positions filled with staff possessing the proper skill set to take the agency forward.

The Board's new Executive Director and Deputy Director, having been in place 5 years now, are directly responsible for assessing the agency's direction and compliance with its mission and goals. Both the Executive and Deputy Directors take direct supervisory roles with the various divisions in the agency and formally and informally meet with the staff regularly to ensure operations are progressing as planned.

The Board reviews applications quarterly to determine processing time and number of applications processed. Currently the timeframe for the Board to complete their part of the license processing has been reduced to 1 week. If there is a rise in

any of the number of processing days, measures are taken to determine why there is an increase and changes are made to eliminate the extra processing time. Quarterly surveys are sent to new licensees in order to gather information regarding the licensure process and customer service. Based on survey results, action is taken to correct and improve agency performance.

Weekly meetings are held by the investigative staff to address pending investigations. Strategies and procedures in dealing with arising issues are discussed. Updates and results from current investigations are reviewed. The Mississippi Prescription Monitoring System is one tool utilized to determine if a physician is issuing an unusual amount of controlled substances prescriptions and if a patient is receiving an unusual amount of controlled substances prescriptions. Based on results from the Mississippi Prescription Monitoring System investigations are initiated.

In-House Counsel along with dedicated staff will add greatly to the overall review and assessment of proper licensing, investigations, and subsequent disciplinary actions.

6. Agency Goals, Objectives, Strategies and Measures by Program for FY 2025 through FY 2029

Program 1: Licensure

GOAL A: Support and encourage the attempt to recruit healthcare professionals to practice in the State, especially in health professional shortage areas.

OBJECTIVE A.1. Make the licensure and re-licensure process more user-friendly, providing better customer service

Outcome: Increase in the number of applications received online

Outcome: Increase in the number of licenses issued and re-issued

Outcome: Increase in the number of healthcare professionals practicing in the state

Efficiency: Percentage of licensees renewing online

A.1.1. STRATEGY: Participate in the Interstate Medical Licensure Compact

Output: Number of licensees applying/renewing via the Compact

Efficiency: Reduction of wait time for applicants to receive licenses

A.1.3. STRATEGY: Update application submission software programs

Output: Number of programs updated

Efficiency: All applications/renewals come to agency online, eliminating paper handling and speeding turnaround for licensees

OBJECTIVE B.1. Maintain an efficient regulatory agency

Outcome: Best use of licensing staff to minimize time of license issuance
Outcome: Develop licensing staff with knowledge and experience in medical licensing field

A.1.1. STRATEGY: Issue licenses properly in a timely and cost-effective manner

Output: Number of licenses received
Output: Number of licenses issued resulting
Output: Number of tenured licensing staff (> 5 years state service)
Efficiency: Decrease in the length of time to issue licenses
Efficiency: Cost of licensing professional in the medical field
Efficiency: Turnover in licensing staff

Program 2: Investigative

GOAL A: Protect Mississippians from risks to public health by monitoring licensees for violations of the Medical Practice Act.

OBJECTIVE A.1. Monitor the number of licensees who are diverting/abusing prescription drugs and ensure prescribing licensees are doing so for legitimate medical reasons

Outcome: Provide safe health environments (physician's offices) for the public
Outcome: Decrease in the number of licensees over-prescribing controlled substances

A.1.1. STRATEGY: Update Board policies, rules and laws to require licensees to 1. register with the Mississippi Prescription Monitoring Program, and 2. apply and obtain a permit prior to issuing prescriptions for controlled substances.

Output: Number of updates required
Output: Better information concerning the storage and safeguard of prescription drugs
Efficiency: Decrease in the number of licensees over-prescribing controlled substances
Efficiency: Cost of implementing registration process and administering program

A.1.2. STRATEGY: Investigate complaints concerning misuse of controlled substances and misuse of prescription authority among licensees

Output: Number of complaints received
Output: Number of investigations resulting
Efficiency: Decrease in the number of licensees over-prescribing controlled

substances
Efficiency: Cost of investigations

OBJECTIVE B.1 Investigate complaints regarding licensees' improper behavior as it relates to patient protocol.

Outcome: Provide safe health environments (physician's offices) for the public
Outcome: Decrease in the number of licensees violating the Medical Practice Act by abusing patients and their rights

A.1.1. STRATEGY: Investigate complaints concerning improper behavior of licensees

Output: Number of complaints received
Output: Number of investigations resulting
Efficiency: Decrease in the number of practicing licensees exhibiting improper behavior
Efficiency: Cost of investigations

OBJECTIVE C.1 To maintain an efficient regulatory agency

Outcome: Best use of investigative staff to minimize time of investigations
Outcome: Develop investigative staff with knowledge and experience in medical licensing field

A.1.1. STRATEGY: Investigate complaints in a timely and cost-effective manner

Output: Number of complaints received
Output: Number of investigations resulting
Output: Number of tenured investigators (> 5 years state service)
Efficiency: Decrease in the length of time to resolution of documented complaints
Efficiency: Cost of investigations
Efficiency: Turnover in investigative staff